

**Philip S. Walker
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ITEM NO. 20
FILE NO. _____

January 4, 20167

**Essie Labrot, Town Clerk
Town of West Hartford
50 South Main Street
West Hartford, CT 06107**

Dear Essie,

Re: West Hartford Senior Citizens Advisory Commission

I am pleased to enclose the Commission's 2016 Report to the Town Council in accordance with WH Code Sec. 5-39.

We would appreciate your sending copies thereof to the Town Council members as we hope to have as many of them as feasible join us at our next scheduled meeting on January 17.

Most sincerely,



**Philip S. Walker, Chair
West Hartford Senior Citizens
Advisory Commission**

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Handwritten:
ESSIE S. LABROT
TOWN OF WEST HARTFORD

**West Hartford Senior Citizens Advisory Commission
2016 Report to the West Hartford Town Council
Pursuant to WH Code Sec. 5-39**

I. Introduction

The West Hartford Senior Citizens Advisory Commission meets monthly, with the exception of July and August, at the Elmwood Senior Center, commencing at 10am on the third Tuesday of the month. Meetings of the Commission are open to all and guests are always welcome. The Commission nominally has nine members. Due to the recent departure of Connie Melo, there is presently one vacancy. The Commission encourages interested citizens to submit an application to the Town Clerk's Office to be considered for Commission membership. Phil Walker serves as its Chair. The other members are Noreen Bachteler, Ray Guenter, Linda Hanson, Bob Kennedy, Ruth Kurien, Ellen Phillips, and Donna Sterling. We continue to be fortunate in having the services of our Volunteer Recording Secretary, Amy Lynn Silverman.

The Commission relies heavily on our liaison with several Town of West Hartford administrators who serve our senior citizens on a daily basis. Through them we are apprised of the interests and needs of our seniors and of how these issues are being addressed. We receive monthly reports by Gina Marino, Director of the Senior Center at Bishops Corner, and Kathleen Faroni, Director of the Elmwood Senior Center. Prior to her departure from town service in the latter part of the past year, Armena Walsh of West Hartford

Social Services Human Services, added greatly to our meetings. We look forward to the Department's assigning a new representative to attend Commission meetings. Mayor Shari Cantor continues to support us and to attend our meetings whenever her schedule permits. Appreciating Shari's significantly increased responsibilities and obligations, we have requested her to ask another member of the Council to represent her when she is not available so Commission members can remain current on matters coming before the Town Council, particularly those affecting senior citizens.

A number of Commission members attended the Forum for the candidates running for the General Assembly and Congress at the West Hartford Town Hall. Members conveyed to the candidates their hopes that the interests of seniors will continue to be considered in the Connecticut legislature.

II. Senior Job Bank

Last year the Commission continued its support for the Senior Job Bank. This resource is important, both for seniors who need its services and for those able to provide them. We look forward to hearing regularly how the SJB is progressing from Jim Doran and, its new Executive Director, Sheila Diamond. We were pleased to learn that during this past year, over 1500 job referrals were made through the SJB.

III. Senior Transportation Needs

Providing adequate transportation for West Hartford seniors has been a priority for the Commission. Commission member Ruth Kurien serves on the board of ITN Central CT, a significant transportation option for seniors. ITN's Executive Director, Kevin Farmer, attends most Commission meetings. ITN has been quite successful during this past year in adding drivers and increasing ridership significantly. On October 27, 2016, ITN celebrated its twelve-thousandth ride at a ceremony at Hamilton Heights attended by a number of Commission members. A grant from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving has assisted ITN in developing its Strategic Plan. Under Kevin's leadership, ITN has commenced fund-raising efforts to support its operation. We were particularly pleased to learn from Kevin that a workshop conducted for ITN drivers included training on serving clients who have Alzheimer's or other dementias.

IV. Communications with Seniors

The Commission makes a special effort to communicate with West Hartford seniors and to hear from them concerning their needs and interests. We greatly appreciate the briefings from our Senior Center Directors, Gina Marino and Kathleen Faroni, concerning events and activities at their respective Centers. Several Commission members have joined the Senior Center and frequently attend their events. Commission members have attended lunches held by the Senior Centers to recognize and honor their

volunteers. This enables members to hear directly from seniors about programs that affect them, or future ones that may have this potential. Because of such discussions, two of our Commission members, Ellen Phillips and Noreen Bachteler, are exploring the need for the Commission to recommend increased social worker availability at the Senior Centers.

V. Elmwood Senior Center Parking Issue

For some time, the Commission has had a concern with the adequacy and safety of the parking facilities at the Elmwood Senior Center. Commission member Ellen Phillips spent considerable time with Town officials to develop some background on the feasibility of remedying the situation. In September, the Town addressed the most critical areas at the Center. While we believe that additional work needs to be done, we are most grateful to Helen Rubino-Turco, Human and Leisure Services Director, and John Phillips, Public Works Director, for their support in implementing this project

VI. Special Guests

We started out the past year at our January meeting joined by then Mayor, Scott Slifka, and new member of the Town Council, Beth Kerrigan. At our March meeting our guest was another new Council member, Chris Williams. We are always honored having members of the Council as guests at our meetings and hope that, at our January 2017 meeting, as many members as possible will join us. As a Commission charged with the duty to advise the

Council on senior matters, we find it useful to have face-to-face contacts with Council members.

We welcomed a number of senior Town officials during the year. Ed Sanady, Human Services Manager, attended our March meeting, Chief Tracey Gove, Lieutenant Stone, and Officer Orsini, of the West Hartford Police Department, spoke to the Commission in May. In November, Fire Chief Gary Allyn spoke to the Commission the commission regarding the Department's response, not only to fire calls, but to many other emergency situations. Through Helen Rubino-Turco, Bob Kennedy and Phil Walker participated in a planning session for the future development of Wolcott Park. This increased members' awareness of the importance of our West Hartford park system to seniors.

Senator Beth Bye addressed the Commission in June and again demonstrated her concern for the welfare of our senior citizens. A number of Commission members joined Senator Bye at Senior Day at the West Hartford Senior Center on May 25, 2016.

Other guests who presented at Commission meetings during the year included Byron Peterson of AARP, at our April meeting. Mr. Peterson was very informative on the subject of fraud directed at seniors, a topic which was subsequently discussed by Chief Gove at the May meeting. At the November meeting, Christine Dupont from Seabury, presented a most interesting topic: "Changing Landscape of Senior Living: A Roadmap for the Future."

At our final 2016 meeting in December, Dr. George A. Kuschel, Director of the UConn Center on Aging, addressed a vital issue for seniors, the medical care needs of an aging population. Dr. Kuchel is a nationally known scholar in the field of geriatric medicine and he stressed the somewhat different approach of his specialty in concentrating on the patient rather than the disease. He heads an impressive team at the Center on Aging. The Commission, and Kathleen and Gina as well, believe that consideration should be given to inviting representatives of the Center on Aging, to present programs on geriatric medicine to the members of our Senior Centers.

VII. Conclusion

The members of the Commission are dedicated to providing service to the Town of West Hartford and its senior citizens. Members experience a large measure of personal satisfaction from their roles. The years of growing old may not always be golden but they can be brightened by the caring concerns of those within and outside of the Town administration. We intend to do our part to promote those "caring concerns". Toward this end, the Commission is always available to meet with the Council and/or any of its individuals and with Town officials.

Respectfully submitted,

West Hartford Senior Citizens Advisory Commission

By 

Philip S. Walker, its Chair

December 31, 2016